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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4198
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002047

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEES
ANNOUNCED

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Cheryl Fernandes for reasons
1.4. (b & d).

11. (U) Summary: On October 9 Speaker of the House of Representatives Dimeji Bankole named new chairmen of the House's Standing Committees (reconstituting those he dissolved in July) and increased the number of committees from 72 to 84. Nearly all of the former chairmen retained their seats, but a handful of positions were conceded to opposition parties. Members of the Integrity Group remained in their previous positions, reportedly by choice. Notable changes include the removal of former Speaker Etteh's loyalists from their positions, the movement of Abike Erewa from the Media Committee to the newly formed Diaspora Committee, Habeeb Fashinro's appointment to the Legislative Budget and Research Committee, and Beni Lar's appointment to the Human Rights Committee. End Summary.

12. (U) On July 31, Speaker of the House of Representatives Dimeji Bankole dissolved 69 of the 72 Standing Committees just before the House went on a six-week recess. On October 9, Bankole named new chairmen of the House's Standing Committees and increased the number of committees from 72 to 184. The new committees include: Ministry of the Niger Delta, Internal Security, Climate, Civil Society and Donors, Lake Chad, Banking and Currency, Women (in) Parliament, Housing, Diaspora, Constituency Outreach, and Urban Development. Nearly all chairmen retained their seats, but Bankole did concede a handful of leadership positions to opposition parties. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) received 70 chairmanship positions; the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) received 7; the Action Congress (AC) received 2; and the Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA) received 1. Local media quoted Bankole saying, "We did this exercise with all sense of fair play. These are the statistics: 9% of the chairmen were dropped, 27% are brand new, 50% were reshuffled from one seat to the other, 60% were returned but not necessarily in the committees they were before."

13. (C) Several core members of the Integrity Group (which was originally organized by members of the House in opposition to former Speaker Patricia Etteh), including Farouk Lawan (PDP, Kano State), Ternugu Tsegba (PDP, Benue State), and John Halims Agoda (PDP, Delta State), chose to remain with their previous committees despite offers to change positions. Tsegba recently told PolFSN that being a member of the House

is most important and not serving on a specific committee does not limit the influence he can exert on an issue.
(Comment: Post presumes the members of the Integrity Group maintained their positions to ward off criticism that their effort to remove former Speaker Patricia Etteh was motivated by a desire to secure better positions. Also, as members of the Integrity Group are reportedly uncomfortable with some of Bankole's more independent actions, maintaining their current positions tactically enables them to support Bankole if his committee changes are successful, or to distance themselves if problems arise. End Comment.)

14. (C) Overall, Bankole appears to have carried out the reshuffle using a team approach, and based appointments on merit. Still, among the reconstituted committees there are several notable changes, including:

-- the removal of Etteh's loyalists from their positions

-- the movement of Abike Erewa (AC, Lagos State) from the Media Committee to the newly formed Diaspora Committee
(Comment: Erewa, a sponsor of the Freedom of Information bill, is a member of the same ethnic group and zone as Bankole, although not a close associate; she was likely appointed to Diaspora to keep her busy traveling and out of the way. End Comment.)

-- Habeeb Fashinro's (ANPP, Lagos State) appointment as chairman of the Legislative Budget and Research Committee
(Comment: Post has found Fashinro to be abrasive and lacking in the ability to move from theory to implementation. He is,

ABUJA 00002047 002 OF 002

however, a trusted member of Bankole's inner circle. End Comment.)

-- Beni Lar's (PDP, Plateau State) appointment as chair of the Human Rights Committee (Note: Lar was previously the chairwoman of the Women Affairs Committee. Her father, Solomon Lar, was a member of the groups which helped organize the PDP, and held a number of leadership positions in the party. Beni Lar has a Western-leaning perspective and is adept at connecting people to resolve issues and move plans forward. In her first term in office, Lar has shown interest in many issues including women's affairs and corruption. End Note.)

15. (U) A complete list of the committees and the chairmen has been submitted to AF/W.

16. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
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